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Human resources management

Improvement of equitable geographical representation in the United Nations Secretariat

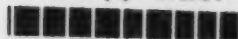
Report of the Secretary-General**

Summary

The present report is submitted pursuant to the request of the General Assembly contained in section II, paragraph 29, of its resolution 57/305 on human resources management and paragraph 51 of resolution 58/270 on the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2004-2005. The report provides information on the progress made in improving equitable geographical representation of Member States for the period from June 1994 to June 2004, as well as specific measures implemented or planned to further improve representation.

* A/59/150.

** The four-day delay in the submission of the present report was due to the need for late consultations and editing within the Secretariat.



I. Introduction

1. The present report on improvement of equitable geographical representation of Member States in the staff of the Secretariat appointed to posts subject to geographical distribution in the system of desirable ranges is submitted pursuant to the request made by the General Assembly in section II, paragraph 29, of its resolution 57/305 of 15 April 2003. The system of desirable ranges is described in the Secretary-General's report of 9 December 2003 on the composition of the Secretariat (A/58/666, para. 12). The present report analyses the recruitment of nationals of unrepresented and underrepresented Member States from 1994 to 2004 and highlights the measures taken by the Secretariat in its continuing efforts to improve geographical representation. Pursuant to paragraph 51 of Assembly resolution 58/270 of 23 December 2003, the report also recommends measures for developing a more robust capability within the Office of Human Resources Management of the Secretariat to enable it to reduce the level of underrepresentation of Member States and the number of unrepresented Member States.

II. Recruitment of nationals from unrepresented and underrepresented Member States

2. The recruitment of staff to posts subject to geographical distribution is governed by the system of desirable ranges. For that purpose, Member States are grouped into four categories: unrepresented, underrepresented, within range and overrepresented. A Member State is considered "unrepresented" when not a single one of its nationals is serving in a post subject to geographical distribution having gone through the established selection process. It is "underrepresented" when the number of its nationals appointed to such posts is below the lower limit of the desirable range. It is "within range" when the number of its nationals appointed to such posts is between the upper and lower limits of the desirable range; and it is "overrepresented" when the number of its nationals appointed to such posts exceeds the upper limit of the desirable range. The representation status of Member States is affected by many factors, notably turnover of staff, changes in the scale of assessments and changes in the total number of Member States.

3. Over the past 10 years there has been an improvement in the levels of "unrepresentation" and underrepresentation of Member States. Table 1 shows the total number of unrepresented and underrepresented Member States, as well as the total membership of the Organization annually for the period 1994-2004. The figures demonstrate a positive trend: the number of unrepresented Member States, 28 in 1994, declined to 15 in 2004, while the number of underrepresented Member States decreased from 25 in 1994 to 10 in 2004. However, of the 28 unrepresented Member States in June 1994, 5 continue to be unrepresented (Brunei Darussalam, Marshall Islands, Monaco, Sao Tome and Principe and Turkmenistan), and of the 25 underrepresented Member States in June 1994, 3 are currently underrepresented (Japan, Norway and Saudi Arabia).

Table 1
Number of unrepresented and underrepresented Member States, 1994-2004 (as at 30 June)

<i>Member States</i>	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Unrepresented	28	25	23	25	24	24	21	18	16	17	15
Underrepresented	25	25	22	20	9	13	8	10	11	10	10
Number of Member States	184	185	185	185	185	185	188	189	189	191	191

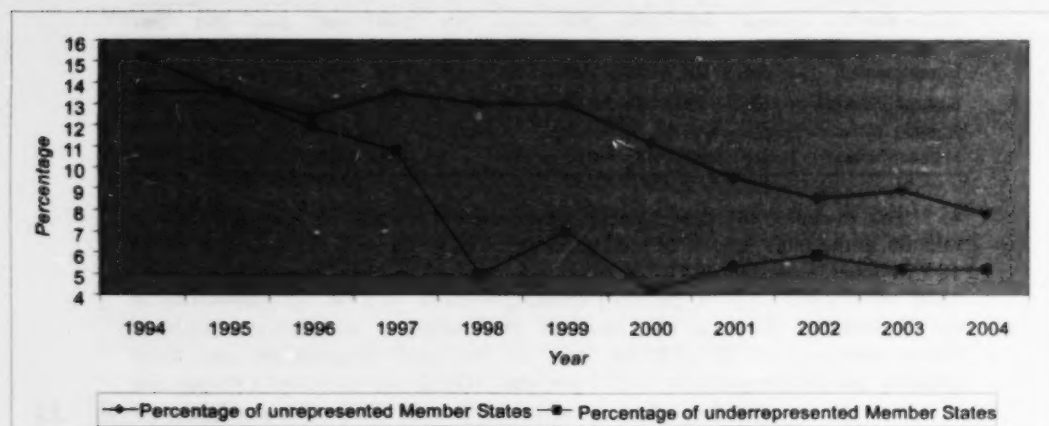
4. The evolution of geographical representation should be analysed also in relation to the total number of Member States in a given year. For example, of the 184 Member States in 1994, 28 (15.2 per cent of the total membership) were unrepresented and 25 (13.6 per cent) underrepresented. In 2004, the membership of the Organization stands at 191; however, the number of unrepresented Member States decreased to 15 (7.8 per cent of the total membership) and those underrepresented decreased to 10 (5.2 per cent). The decreases reflect a 48-per-cent improvement in unrepresentation between 1994 and 2004 and a 62-per-cent improvement in underrepresentation during the same period (see table 2).

Table 2
Unrepresented and underrepresented Member States as a percentage of the total number of Member States, 1994-2004 (as at 30 June 2004)

<i>Member States</i>	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	<i>Improvement 1994-2004 (percentage)</i>
Unrepresented (as a percentage of the total)	15.2	13.5	12.4	13.5	13.0	13.0	11.2	9.5	8.5	8.9	7.8	48
Underrepresented (as a percentage of the total)	13.6	13.5	11.9	10.8	4.9	7.0	4.2	5.3	5.8	5.2	5.2	62
Total	184	185	185	185	185	185	188	189	189	191	191	

5. Figure 1 illustrates the yearly fluctuation for the period 1994-2004. The year 1999 marked the beginning of an accelerated decrease in the level of unrepresentation. The level of underrepresentation appears to have reached a plateau, at 5.2 per cent, in 2003 and 2004.

Figure I
Unrepresented and underrepresented Member States as a percentage of the total
number of Member States, 1994-2004 (as at 30 June 2004)



III. Measures to improve equitable geographical representation

6. The Secretary-General places great importance on the mandate of the General Assembly to ensure equitable geographical representation among the staff of the Secretariat and has implemented a number of measures, including those set out below.

A. Recruitment of candidates from unrepresented and underrepresented Member States

7. Table 3 shows the number and the percentage of recruitments from unrepresented and underrepresented Member States over the past 10 years to posts subject to geographical distribution. On average, 22 per cent, or more than one out of five recruitments, has been from an unrepresented or underrepresented Member State. The appointment percentage fluctuated between a high of 33.3 per cent and a low of 10 per cent.

Table 3
Recruitments for posts subject to geographical distribution from unrepresented and underrepresented Member States^a

Appointments	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Geographical appointments	124	135	129	93	104	123	141	159	165	168	208
Geographical appointments from unrepresented and underrepresented Member States	22	45	25	16	25	20	41	43	24	36	21
Appointments from unrepresented and underrepresented Member States (as a percentage of all geographical appointments)	17.7	33.3	19.4	17.2	24.0	16.3	29.1	27.0	14.5	21.4	10.0

^a Appointments over a 12-month period, 1 July to 30 June, from 1994 to 2004.

B. Recruitment through national competitive examinations

8. The national competitive examination is an important mechanism promoting the recruitment of qualified young candidates from unrepresented and underrepresented Member States. Over the past 10 years, a total of 534 successful national competitive examination candidates have been recruited, 141 of whom were from unrepresented and underrepresented Member States. Of the 28 Member States that were unrepresented in 1994, 19 became represented as a result of recruitment of successful national competitive examination candidates from those countries. Table 4 shows the number of Member States participating in the national competitive examination from 1994 to 2004 and the number of candidates convoked (i.e. invited to sit the examination).

Table 4
Number of Member States participating in the national competitive examination and total number of candidates convoked

	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Number of Member States participating in the national competitive examination	24	30	34	14	18	24	19	34	31	46	62
Number of unrepresented and underrepresented Member States participating in the national competitive examination	8	9	9	8	10	12	15	22	23	14	18
Total number of candidates convoked	698	641	801	823	1 342	2 310	1 180	2 886	2 479	3 911	4 012

9. A significant increase is observable in both the number of Member States participating in the national competitive examination and in the number of candidates convoked to sit the examination.

10. The increase in the number of Member States reflects the participation of a large number of those which are below the mid-point and in danger of becoming underrepresented as a result of projected retirements and other separations. The Office of Human Resources Management provides support to Member States in preparing for the conduct of the examinations in their countries, including organizing briefings on how to arrange publicity for the examination, provision of information material and links to the web site of the Office.

C. Human resources action plans

11. In 1999, as part of human resources management reform, the Office of Human Resources Management introduced the human resources action plan to assist the departments and offices of the Secretariat in setting goals and assessing results in a number of areas, including the improvement of equitable geographical representation. Human resources targets are set and signed every two years between the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management and heads of department.

12. Twice a year, the Office meets with departments and offices to assess the progress that has been made towards the agreed targets. To allow more proactive self-monitoring, the Office will provide, by the end of 2004, online information and monthly progress reports. Since the end of the 2001-2002 human resources planning cycle, the Office has provided an analysis and a performance scorecard that shows the extent to which the departments have achieved the targets stated in the action plans.

13. As far as the filling of vacant posts subject to geographical distribution is concerned, the target in the action plan for each department is to recruit at least one candidate from an unrepresented or underrepresented Member State, taking into account article 101.3 of the Charter of the United Nations. During the second planning cycle (2001-2002), 18 departments improved their results compared with the previous cycle (1999-2000); 20 departments recruited at least one candidate from underrepresented Member States; and two of those departments also recruited one candidate from an unrepresented Member State. During the first year of the third cycle (2003-2004), 16 departments have recruited candidates from underrepresented Member States and two departments have recruited national competitive examination candidates from unrepresented Member States.

14. The data provided in tables 1 and 2 indicate that human resources action plans have contributed to the improvement in geographical representation of Member States.

D. Staff selection system

15. As part of the Secretary-General's reform programme for human resources management, a new staff selection system was introduced in May 2002. Under that system, when making the selection decision, heads of department and office are

required to certify that they have taken into account the Organization's human resources objectives and targets as reflected in the departmental human resources action plans, especially with regard to geography and gender. No case will be considered by the central review bodies unless such a written certification has been entered in the electronic support tool of the system, Galaxy electronic staffing (e-staffing), a feature that serves as a reminder to heads of department that they are accountable for the improvement of the geographical representation of staff in their departments and/or offices.

16. In order to assist further departments in improving geographical representation throughout the Organization, the Galaxy e-staffing system has been enhanced to include a special feature that highlights candidates from unrepresented and underrepresented Member States. The system also offers a search function to help managers identify candidates by nationality.

E. Partnership with Member States

17. In order to recruit more staff from Member States that are unrepresented or underrepresented, partnership between the Office of Human Resources Management and the Member States is essential. The Office holds periodic meetings with representatives from unrepresented and underrepresented Member States, with the most recent meeting held in April 2004. The objective of the meetings is to inform the concerned Member States of the measures taken to recruit their nationals, to learn about their concerns and to identify areas where the Office can collaborate with the Member States to improve their representation. The Office will host such meetings at least once every year.

18. In addition, special briefings are held on request for representatives of the permanent missions for unrepresented and underrepresented Member States to share information on their representation.

19. Recognizing that special efforts must be made for Member States with no representation or a very low representation level, recruitment missions have been organized to address the issue. For example, the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management and other senior officials of the Office of Human Resources Management conducted recruitment missions to Japan in 2000, 2001 and 2002. Recruitment campaigns were launched before the missions, candidates were interviewed and a list of candidates was compiled and presented to heads of departments and offices for consideration. A number of candidates were subsequently recruited, after going through the regular recruitment procedures for advertised vacancies.

IV. Proposed additional measures

20. In paragraph 51 of its resolution 58/270, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report to it at its fifty-ninth session on proposals for developing a more robust capability within the Office of Human Resources Management of the Secretariat to enable it to reduce the level of underrepresentation of Member States and the number of unrepresented Member States. Pursuant to that resolution, a number of additional measures are proposed below.

A. "Fast-track" recruitment procedure

21. The Secretariat is proposing to introduce a "fast-track" recruitment procedure for candidates from unrepresented and underrepresented Member States to posts at the P-4 level and above in line with the overall principles and procedures of the staff selection system.

22. Based on analysis of staffing projections, the Office of Human Resources Management plans to initiate targeted recruitment campaigns in partnership with departments and concerned Member States with a view to identifying potential candidates from Member States that are unrepresented or underrepresented for positions at the P-4 level and above. In accordance with established procedures, the Office will forward the names of potential candidates to programme managers for their review and interview against pre-approved generic job profiles. After review by the central review bodies, endorsed candidates will be placed on a special roster, which will be made available to programme managers who have vacancies at the P-4 level and above in the relevant occupational group. External candidates from unrepresented and underrepresented Member States who have applied for specific vacancy announcements and who have been endorsed by the central review bodies will be placed on this special roster as well. If a suitable candidate is found from the roster, such a candidate would be recruited without the issuance of a vacancy announcement. Should no suitable candidate be found from the special roster, the post would be advertised in accordance with established procedures.

B. National focal points

23. In order to facilitate collaboration between the Office of Human Resources Management and unrepresented and underrepresented Member States, the Office proposes that relevant permanent missions identify focal points with whom the Secretariat would work on various aspects of increasing their representation, including the organization of national competitive examinations and identification of qualified candidates.

C. Office of Human Resources Management focal point

24. The task of improving geographical representation requires the systematic development and implementation of strategies to pursue the recruitment of candidates from unrepresented and underrepresented Member States. A focal point is being established for this purpose at the P-5 level in the Office of Human Resources Management. The incumbent will work closely with departments, candidates and Member States and, in collaboration with the national focal points, organize recruitment missions to identify qualified candidates from unrepresented and underrepresented Member States, as necessary. The incumbent will also coordinate the "fast-track" recruitment procedure.

V. Conclusion and recommendation

25. Achieving equitable geographical representation of Member States in posts subject to geographical distribution in the Secretariat is a complex and

challenging task. It requires long-term commitment and concerted efforts on the part of the Secretariat, as well as the Member States concerned. The Secretary-General invites the General Assembly to take note of the measures already implemented by the Secretariat to improve geographical representation and to endorse his recommendation on the "fast-track" recruitment procedure and the establishment of national focal points.
